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Topfree group to protest again

By ROCHELLE D. LEWIS
Times-Union

Some members of the Topfree Seven will stage another protest this summer, but Monroe County's chief prosecutor warned that police will again arrest any female demonstrator who bares her breasts in public.

"We're encouraging women across the state to have similar protests," said Ramona Santorelli, one of the women who staged the original protest at Cobbs Hill Park June 21.

Santorelli and six others were charged with indecent exposure, a misdemeanor.

At their trial before City Court Jugde Herman J. Walz, the women argued that the statute was unconstitutional because it prohibits women, but not men, from appearing nude above the waist in public.

Walz acquitted the women of the charges, but upheld the law as constitutional.

He ruled more narrowly that the law should not have been applied to protesters exercising their rights to freedom of speech. The Monroe County district attorney's office is appealing his decision.

Last year the group publicized its intentions to protest, naming the time and location. But this year, Santorelli said the media will not be notified of the location until the day of the protest, June 21.

"You learn from your experiences," Santorelli said. "Our experience is . . . giving out the location attracted a lot of attention."

That attention, she said came in the form of "gawkers" and others, who harassed the women during their demonstration.

Despite that harassment, she said the protest helped educate the public about freedom of expression and equal rights.

District Attorney Howard R. Relin said today that the women will again be arrested if they protest, despite Walz's ruling in December.

"That decision is under appeal," Relin said. "As far as I'm concerned, there is no ruling that prohibits their arrest if they protest again. That ruling (by Walz) is not even binding on other judges."

Santorelli said that she and others are willing to be arrested again. Two others of the original Topfree Seven have said they will participate, she added.

"We won last year on First Amendment rights. We're still going to target equal protection of the law — the 14th Amendment."

Relin, who has been outspoken on the issue of topfree protests, said today there are better ways of demonstrating.

Ramona Santorelli
To face arrest again

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle 5/20/87 →

Topfree 7 vow new protest

Democrat and Chronicle

Women who bared their breasts in a Rochester park last summer to protest state nudity laws have scheduled a similar protest this summer.

Ramona Santorelli said last night the protest will be held June 21, the anniversary of last year's demonstration in which seven women, dubbed the Topfree 7 were arrested in Cobbs Hill Park.

The women involved in last year's protest sought their own arrest in order to challenge the state law prohibiting them from baring their breasts in public.

Indecent exposure charges against last year's participants were dismissed in City Court in December. Prosecutors have said they plan to appeal.